

Statement of the Honorable Walter B. Jones (NC-3)  
**Hearing on “A look at H.R. 1826 and  
the Public Financing of Congressional Campaigns”**  
Committee on House Administration  
July 30, 2009

Chairman Brady and Ranking Member Lungren, thank you for the opportunity to testify today on H.R. 1826, the *Fair Elections Now Act*. This hearing on H.R. 1826 is a critical step toward returning Washington back to the people, and is one of the most important hearings I’ve testified at in 15 years.

Members of Congress are currently mired in a system where the perception is that money has undue influence over votes. There is a place for lobbying in politics, but when Members have to ask those who lobby for campaign money, the public begins to distrust their representatives. The system is the problem, and I want to help fix the system. I want to be part of the solution. In 1989, when I was a member of the North Carolina House, I introduced a campaign finance bill that was heavily debated but never enacted.

In Washington we have a problem. Let me give you an example that I will never forget: in 2003, the House passed the Medicare prescription drug coverage bill. That night, the Leadership started the vote at 3:00 am and kept the vote open until 5:53 in the morning. That was a political Sodom and Gomorrah night. It was absolutely ugly. I remember lobbyists standing outside of the Chamber, and approaching Members on the streets. These were the same lobbyists that influenced the drafting of the bill, and have contributed over \$10 million in a single election cycle. (CBS News)

The same thing is happening today: special interests are pouring money into the health care debate. It’s time to return the government to the people. The first step is for Congress to pass legislation like the *Fair Elections Now Act*, which would help ensure that the average citizen has a voice. Let the people, not special interest groups, control Washington.

As the system currently works, special interests contribute heavily to Congressional campaigns. According to OpenSecrets.org, in 2008, Democrats received \$67.7 million in contributions from lobbyists, and Republicans received \$57.1 million. This system creates the perception that special interest groups have too much influence, and many Americans believe that the Congress cannot tackle tough issues because of that influence.

Legislators should be free to vote their conscience as they weigh what is best for their constituents. Their views should not be influenced by special interests and campaign fundraising. I don’t know any Member of Congress – in either party – that enjoys raising money. But, that is the system that we are in, and we’ve got to fix it.

Again, let me repeat: H.R. 1826 is a giant step toward fixing the problem and rebuilding public trust in Washington. It is my hope that this Committee will report out the *Fair Elections Now Act*. Chairman Brady and Ranking Member Lungren, thank you for the opportunity to testify today.